

Burlington NPA Ward 6 Minutes – Ballot Questions Forum – March 1, 2018 – DRAFT –

Date of Assembly: 03/01/2018

Start Time: (Commence): 7:00 PM

Finish Time: (Adjourn): 9:00PM

Location: Greek Church at 600 South Willard Street

Notetaker: Brian MacDonald

Steering Committee Members Present:

Matt Grady, Michelle Mraz, Brian MacDonald, Charles Simpson

Minutes Approved

Public Comments Section

Marianne Ward from Ward 7 raised concerns about parking on Summit Street, which has some “resident only” parking restrictions. She brought a petition for Ward members to sign, asking for these restrictions to be reviewed, which she will forward to the Department of Public Works.

Ballet Item 5 – Perpetually Affordable Housing

Laura Mistretta, a member of Rights & Democracy, read and discussed this ballot item, which would increase funding for affordable housing. She was asked questions about other sources of funding, and whether this duplicated existing funding streams.

Ballot Item 3 – General Obligation Bonds

Charles Simpson read the ballot wording and expressed concerns that this initiative, while seeming like free money, may not be in the city’s best interest because of existing debt load and attendant debt service costs, UVM’s 10-year break on all other infrastructure costs, that this may be passed on as a student fee at UVM, and that this doesn’t address a root problem of adding more student housing to UVM’s campus.

Karen Paul reread the ballot item and expressed support for the initiative, stating that it’s in the city’s interest, that it’s a good example of how to distribute infrastructure costs to various user bases, and that it hasn’t been determined if this is a student fee. She also said that additional costs for University Place will be partially UVM’s responsibility if the upgrade is beyond the current scope of work.

Questions included voting percentages needed to pass funding initiatives, how long the agreement has been in development, why this isn’t a win-win situation, and how does the Trinity campus fit into UVM’s overall housing plan.

Ballot Item 1 – School Budget

Liz Curry spoke in support of the budget, indicating that it is essentially level funded in Burlington, and that the tax increase comes from legislative decisions on statewide school funding. Other factors that have contributed to the budget include city property assessments falling under 80%, the education reserve fund being depleted, and healthcare costs. The VSBA has produced a video explaining Vermont's school funding system, available at <http://www.vtvsba.org/fundingvideo>

Joel Fitzgerald addressed concerns with the tax increase, indicating that he thinks the past trends and current increases are not supportable, and that Burlington needs to make changes to its budgeting priorities, including a reduced overhead and greater value in the administration, reduced overhead in facilities, and a better payroll system for paraeducators.

Questions included what happens if the budget doesn't pass, why don't the paraeducators have a contract, and is the free/reduced food program included in this budget.

Ballot Item 2 – Regional Emergency Dispatch

Charlie Baker of CCPRC supports this item, pointing out that there's no cost or personnel changes involved with the initiative, but that this is a "next step" exploration to see if there's a better way to provide dispatch services, and that in order to do so, the municipalities who are interested in participating must approve this step in order to be included.

Kathryn Clark, a dispatcher and union representative in Burlington, expressed concerns that consolidation won't result in meaningful time savings, and that the second step, if approved, would proceed without a public vote. She mentioned that Burlington operates more efficiently than some reference, consolidated dispatch centers, and that more information is needed in order to make an informed decision.

Questions included will this result in a loss of local control, are there downsides to collaboration, and is this a rushed process.

Ballot Item 7 Age 21 for Tobacco Purchases

Rob Backus had concerns that the measure doesn't treat adults like adults, and that individuals, as adults, have the right to make adult choices.

Bill Keogh supports the measure, saying it's important to reduce availability of tobacco products to those who are impressionable.

Questions included the proposed age for marijuana use, do prohibitions work, what are other states doing, and how will current smokers be supported if the measure passes while they're between 18 to 21 years of age.

Ballot Item 6 – F-35 Basing

Rosanne Greco, retired USAF, supports a yes vote on the initiative, citing noise as the primary problem, and that it will impact 6600 individuals in the flight path. She expressed concerns about the houses that have already been removed near the airport, and that the F-35's will not bring new jobs. She contends that the ANG will continue to have a mission even if the F-35 is not based here, that it's not too late to reverse the basing decision, and that other missions such as transport or cargo aircraft could be explored as options.

Chris Caputo, spokesperson for the VT ANG, supports a no vote on the initiative, stating that the evaluation and basing decision process has undergone a transparent and truthful review since 2009, that there is no alternate, off-the-shelf mission proposed for the VT ANG, that the mission cannot be changed by municipal vote, and that all of the challenges to this process and mission have failed. He expressed concerns about how the ballot item is worded, and also disputed noise level data.

Questions included do all states have a National Guard presence, what is the National Guard's mission and responsibility to its local population, what is the actual noise difference between aircraft, how is the wording on the ballot disingenuous, and how can noise levels can be mitigated.